

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 5546

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PGOV

SUBJ: GOP POLICY IN ANGOLA

REF: A. LISBON 5542

1. TWENTY MINUTES AFTER BEING SWORN IN LAST NIGHT MELO ANTUNES RECEIVED ME IN HIS OFFICE AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. I TOLD HIM I WANTED TO DISCUSS (1) WESTERN ATTITUDE TOWARD THE NEW GOVERNMENT AND (2) OUR DEEP CONCERN WITH EVENTS IN ANGOLA.

2. ON THE FIRST SUBJECT, I ASKED ANTUNES HOW HE THOUGHT THE WEST SHOULD REACT TO THE NEW GOP. ANTUNES REPLIED THAT "SOMEWHAT SURPRISINGLY" AZEVEDO HAD SHOWN CONSIDERABLE COMPETENCE DURING THE NEGOTIATIONS. ANTUNES NOW BELIEVES AZEVEDO IS CAPABLE OF LEADING PORTUGAL TOWARD DEMOCRACY. THERE IS NO DOUBT, HE SAID, THAT A DEMOCRATIC PORTUGAL IS IN THE INTEREST OF THE WEST. IN THE PAST, HOWEVER, THE WEST HAS SHOWN SOME HESITATION AT CRITICAL MOMENTS IN PROVIDING SUPPORT. HE HOPES THIS WILL NOT HAPPEN NOW. THE CURRENT OF THOUGHT HE, ANTUNES, REPRESENTS CONSIDERS THE NEW GOP THE BEST THAT COULD BE ACHIEVED IN THE PRESENT POLITICAL CLIMATE. HE IS HEARTENED BY ITS PROSPECTS. THE BIGGEST STUMBLING BLOCK TO SUCCESS WILL BE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. WHILE EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT ARE ALWAYS WELCOME, GOP WILL NEED RAPID AND CONCRETE ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IF POLITICAL STABILITY IS TO BE ACHIEVED.

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3. ON ANGOLA I MADE THE SAME POINTS I HAD MADE EARLIER IN THE DAY TO COSTA GOMES (REF A) INCLUDING: INFLUX OF ARMS, SUPPORT BY PORTUGUESE TROOPS FOR MPLA, POLITICAL PRESSURE ON UNITA. I NOTED THAT WHILE OFFICIAL GOP POLICY TOWARD ANGOLA IS ONE OF NEUTRALITY, THERE IS A DECIDED TILT TOWARD THE MPLA. THE US COULDS NOT TOLERATE A SITUATION IN WHICH ANGOLA WOULD BE TURNED OVER TO THE COMMUNISTS ON NOV 11. MY GOVERNMENT HAD INSTRUCTED ME TO FIND OUT WHETHER THE NEW GOP WOULD FOLLOW A TRULY NEUTRAL POLICY BY IMPEDING THE INFLUX OF ARMS AND BY PREVENTING THE KIND OF MILITARY ACTION THAT HAS LED TO THE BREAKDOWN IN THE ALVOR AGREEMENT.

4. ANTUNES RESPONDED THAT HE FULLY SHARED OUR CONCERN ABOUT THE DETERIORATING SITUATION. HE HAD BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH ANGOLA A LONG TIME AND HE HAD CONSISTENTLY DEFENDED AND APPLIED A POLICY OF NEUTRALITY. HE HAD BEEN CRITICAL OF GOP FIGURES WHO HAD SUPPORTED THE MPLA (I.E. ROSA COUTINHO). FROM TIME TO TIME GOP FIGURES SUPPORTED THE FNLA, AND HE HAD OPPOSED THIS AS WELL.

5. ANTUNES SAID THAT HE HAD FOLLOWED EVENTS IN ANGOLA DURING THE MOST RECENT CRISIS IN LISBON BUT HE WAS NOT ACQUAINTED WITH THE DETAILS OF THE SITUATION. HE PLANS TO DEVOTE HIMSELF TO THIS AS A MATTER OF HIGHEST PRIORITY AND HOPES TO DEVISE A PROGRAM WITHIN 10 DAYS. THE NOVEMBER 11 DATE IS FIRM. THE PRINCIPLE PROBLEM IS TO FIND OR DEVELOP A COMPETENT AUTHORITY TO WHOM POWER CAN BE TRANSFERRED. IT IS DIFFICULT TO GET THE FEUDING PARTIES TOGETHER ON A COMMON PLATFORM. IN HIS VIEW THE BASIS FOR ANGOLA INDEPENDENCE SHOULD BE RESPECTED FOR THE ALVOR AGREEMENT. POWER SHOULD BE TRANSFERRED TO A COALITION. TO DO THIS MIGHT REQUIRE THE GOP TO IMPOSE ITS WILL, BUT IT LACKED THE MILITARY CAPACITY TO DO THIS EFFECTIVELY.

6. CONSEQUENTLY, ANTUNES SAID, HE WAS RATHER PESSIMISTIC, BUT HE STRESSED THAT HE WOULD TRY TO BRING ABOUT "AT LEAST A MINIMUM OF PEACE" RAPIDLY. IN THIS CONNECTION HE INTENDS TO MAKE A RENEWED EFFORT WITH ANGOLA'S AFRICAN NEIGHBORS. ANTUNES SAID "YOU MAY INFORM YOUR GOVERNMENT THAT I AM VERY CONSCIOUS OF THE SITUATION AND OF THE REPERCUSSIONS IT CAN HAVE ABROAD. I INTEND TO USE ALL THE POLITICAL FORCE AND ALL THE CONFIDENTIAL

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MILITARY FORCE I CAN MUSTER TO CREATE A MORE STABLE SITUATION PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCE."

7. ANTUNES SAID HE WOULD ALSO BE EXAMINING THE QUESTION OF AID TO REFUGEES. HIS REVIEW WOULD ENCOMPASS TRANSPORTATION TO PORTUGAL, ASSISTANCE AFTER ARRIVAL, AND POSSIBLE EMMIGRATION TO OTHER COUNTRIES, INCLUDING THE U.S. I TOLD HIM USG WAS DISPOSED TO BE FORTHCOMING ON REFUGEE ASSISTANCE IN

PORTUGAL BUT WOULD NEED TO HEAR FROM GOP ON ITS PRIORITIES, PARTICULARLY THE QUESTION OF RELIEF VERSUS LONG-TERM INTEGRATION. HE SAID HE WOULD GET TO WORK ON THAT RIGHT AWAY. HE ALSO SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS THE AIRLIFT WITH ME AS SOON AS HE HAD HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW THE PRESENT SITUATION.

8. COMMENT: ANTUNES STRUCK ME AS MUCH MORE RESPONSIVE TO OUR CONCERNS THAN COSTA GOMES, BUT THAT IS NOT SURPRISING. HE NODDED AFFIRMATIVELY AS I MADE OUR POINTS ON ANGOLA AND DID NOT TAKE ISSUE WITH ANY OF THEM. HE SEEMED TO RECOGNIZE THE DANGERS IN THE PRESENT SITUATION. I THINK HE WILL MAKE A GENUINE EFFORT TO RESTORE SOME BALANCE. HOWEVER, WITH ONLY 22,000 SOLDIERS IN ANGOLA AND SERIOUS DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS, HE AND THE GOP HAVE EFFECTIVELY FORFEITED MOST OF THEIR POWER AND INFLUENCE IN ANGOLA.

9. ANTUNES' COMMENTS ON AZEVEDO WERE ENCOURAGING. CERTAINLY THE NEW GOP HAS EMERGED WITH AN EVEN STRONGER ANTI-COMMUNIST ORIENTATION THAN APPEARED POSSIBLE JUST A FEW DAYS AGO. I AGREE WITH ANTUNES THAT IMMEDIATE AND TANGIBLE STEPS OF SUPPORT ARE NECESSARY. I RECOMMEND THAT I BE AUTHORIZED TO GIVE A POSITIVE RESPONSE TO A REQUEST FOR AID TO THE REFUGEES, AND THAT I ALSO BE AUTHORIZED TO INDICATE WE WILL DOUBLE OUR AIRLIFT IF HE INDICATES TO ME AN EXPANSION IS NEEDED. I THINK HE HAS COMMITTED HIMSELF TO DO ALL HE CAN IN ANGOLA, AND I THINK BOTH HIS CONCERN AND HIS COMMITMENT ARE GENUINE.
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